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SUB: PRESS COMMENT

1. SINCE JULY 20 GVN ANNOUNCEMENT OF END TO CENSORSHIP, A NUMBER OF RATHER OUTSPOKEN ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS HAVE APPEARED IN LOCAL PRESS. THESE HAVE INCLUDED STATEMENTS THAT THIEU AND KY SHOULD RESIGN, EXPRESSIONS OF DOUBT AS TO

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VALIDITY OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTE APPROVING THE THIEU-KY CANDIDACY, AND DISSATISFACTION AT ALLEGEDLY ARBITRARY STANDARDS APPLIED BY THE CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL IN DISQUALIFYING CERTAIN UPPER HOUSE LISTS.

2. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HOANG CO BINH HAS PROVIDED SOME OF THE MOST INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS. JULY 25 THOI LUAN GAVE FRONT PAGE TREATMENT TO BINH STATEMENT DENOUNCING GVN FOR SENDING SECURITY OFFICIALS (GENERAL LOAN) TO ASSEMBLY

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DURING VOTE ON THIEU-KY TICKET " IN ORDER TO PUT PRESSURE ON DEPUTIES". HE ALSO BLASTED ASSEMBLY FOR ABDICATING ITS RESPONSIBILITY IN VOTE ON THIEU-KY CANDIDACY AND WARNED THAT ASSEMBLY MUST BEAR FULL BLAME IF ELECTIONS FAIL BECAUSE OF ILLEGAL TACTICS. BINH SAID THAT THIEU AND KY SHOULD DISQUALIFIED AND DECLARED THAT HE "DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE PRESENCE OF THE LIST OF GENERALS THIEU AND KY". SOUTHERN-ORIENTED DAILY TIENG VANG ALSO CARRIED BINH'S REMARKS.

3. JULY 25 SONG POLITICAL COLUMN ALSO ADDRESSED ITSELF TO ASSEMBLY VOTE ON THIEU-KY TICKET, CRITICIZING ASSEMBLY, BUT

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IN PROCESS CASTING GVN IN UNFAVORABLE LIGHT AS WELL. SONG EDITORIALIST WONDERED TO WHOM KY WAS REFERRING WHEN HE SAID "THOSE WHO QUESTION SUPREMACY OF ARMED FORCES WILL BE DEFEATED", AND SPECULATED THAT STATEMENT WAS PROMPTED BY ASSEMBLY "PLOT" TO ELIMINATE THIEU-KY SLATE EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE NO LEGAL GROUNDS FOR DOING SO. "PLOT" WAS FOILED, ACCORDING TO SON, BY PRESENCE OF GENERAL LOAN, WHICH SERVED TO REMIND DEPUTIES THAT THEY "COULD BE ROUNDED UP AND SENT TO PLEIKU FOR A TEST". EDITORIAL ENDED WITH PLEA FOR POLITICAL MATURITY.

4. ELIMINATED PRESIDENTIAL AND SENATORIAL CANDIDATES HAVE VENTED THEIR DISPLEASURE IN PRESS. JULY 27 SAIGON POST AND JULY 28 CHINH LUAN CARRY STATEMENT BY HOANG CHU NGOC, DISQUALIFIED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, TERMING HIS DISQUALIFICATION "AN UNDEMOCRATIC ACT WICH MUST BE DENOUNCED." NGOC CLAIMED THAT HE WAS OFFICIAL CAO DAI REPRESENTATIVE (WHICH IS DOUBTFUL) AND PREDICTED THAT IF HE IS NOT ALLOWED TO RUN "THE THREE MILLION CAO DAISTS OF THE WESTERN PROVINCES WILL DECLARE THE ELECTIONS NULL AND VOID AND BOYCOTT THEM". MOST

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OUTSPOKEN OF DISQUALIFIED UPPER HOUSE CANDIDATES HAS BEEN BUDDHIST LAYMAN HO RUU TUONG. POST AND CHINH LUAN REPORT

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THAT TUONG HAS DEMANDED FORMATION OF TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND RAISED POSSIBILITY OF BUDDHIST BOYCOTT OF ELECTIONS SINCE MOST BUDDHIST TICKETS HAVE BEEN REJECTED.

5. JULY 26 SAIGON DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL ALSO QUESTIONS WISDOM OF CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL DECISIONS ON UPPER HOUSE LISTS. WHILE AGREEING THAT COMMUNIST AND PRO-COMMUNIST CANDIDATES DESERVED TO BE ELIMINATED, NEWS EDITORIAL DOUBTS THAT NEUTRALISTS SENTIMENTS AND LEFT-WING IDEAS ARE SUFFICIENT GROUNDS FOR DISQUALIFICATION. NEWS CLAIMS TO BE EVEN MORE PUZZLED BY FACT THAT NOT ALL NEUTRALISTS AND LEFT-WINGERS WERE ELIMINATED, AND WONDERS HOW DISTINCTION WAS MADE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD NEUTRALISTS. NEWS CONCLUDED THAT CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL SHOULD "REVISE BOLDLY ITS CONCEPT OF LEFT AND RIGHT" WHEN EXAMINING LOWER LOWER HOUSE CANDIDACIES, SO THAT PEOPLE DEDICATED TO RADICAL SOCIAL CHANGE AND REFORMS, NECESSARY TO DEFEAT COMMUNISM, WILL NOT BE ELIMINATED.

COMMENT: PRESS CRITICISM MAY CONTINUE TO INCREASE IN VOLUME,

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PARTICULARLY WHEN PRESIDENTIAL AND UPPER HOUSE CAMPAIGNS SWING INTO HIGH GEAR. SOME EDITORS APPEAR DOUBTFUL OF GOVERNMENTS LEVEL OF TOLERANCE AND RATHER EXPECT A CRACK DOWN AT SOME POINT. BY THEIR OWN ACCOUNT THEY ARE TREADING LIGHTLY. FATHER LAM OF XAY DUNG, FOR EXAMPLE, RECENTLY EXPRESSED DISMAY AT BEING FORCED TO DECIDE FOR HIMSELF WHETHER OR NOT A GIVEN ARTICLE OR STATEMENT IS LIKELY TO BRING DOWN THE WRATH OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT IN THE PAST HE DEPENDED ON THE CENSORS TO CUT OUT OBJECTIONABLE MATERIAL, BUT NOW MUST DECIDE FOR HIMSLEF WHAT IS DANGEROUS TO PRINT. HO VAN DONG, EDITOR OF QUYET TIEN, TOLD EMBOFFS JULY 27 THAT HE IS WORRIED BY THE FACT THAT THE EMPLOYEES OF THE CENSOR'S OFFICE HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED BUT ARE "WORKING TWICE AS HARD." HE IMPLIED THAT THEY ARE COMPILING DOSSIERS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION AGAINST OFFENDING NEWSPAPERS BY THE GOVERNMENT. BUNKER

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